

## Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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TAGS: PINT, UR

SUBJ: SHCHERBITSKIY ON UKRANIAN GRAIN HARVEST: 14 MILLION  
TON SHORTFALL?

REF: A. MOSCOW 14204 B. MOSCOW 14302

1. SUMMARY. AFTER A FOUR-DAY DELAY, SHCHERBITSKIY'S  
CONCLUDING SPEECH AT THE UKRAINIAN PLENUM WAS PUBLISHED  
AND WITH RELATIVELY PRECISE INDICATORS OF THE 1975  
GRAIN HARVEST, WHICH SEEMS TO BE ABOUT 34 MILLION  
TONS. THE SHORTFALL IS ABOUT 14 MILLION TONS BELOW  
1975 ESTIMATED PLAN. HE DISPLAYED KEEN SENSITIVITY  
TO POSSIBLE DOMESTIC ATTACHES ON THE PARTY'S FARM POLICY  
IN VIEW OF THE 1975 DROUGHT. (THE MARCH 1965 FARM  
PROGRAM WAS SPONSORED BY BREZHNEV AND WAS DESIGNED TO  
IRON OUT GREAT FLUCTUATIONS IN HARVESTS, BUT 1972 AND  
1975 HAVE SHOWN IT TO BE HELPLESS AGAINST DROUGHT.)  
SHCHERBITSKIY MAY THEREFORE BELIEVE THAT CRITICISM  
OF HIS PATRON'S PROGRAM MAY INCREASE IN THE  
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PRE-CONGRESS PERIOD. END SUMMARY.

2. EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED ABRIDGED TEXT IN PRAVDA UKRAINY, OCTOBER 3, 1975, OF UKRAINIAN LEADER SHCHERBITSKIY'S CONCLUDING SPEECH AT UKRAINIAN PARTY PLENUM SEPTEMBER 29-30, 1975. IN IT HE GIVES MORE PRECISE INFORMATION ON 1975 UKRAINIAN GRAIN HARVEST THAN PRAVDA, OCTOBER 2, 1975, REPORT. SHCHERBITSKIY SAID THAT "1975 GRAIN HARVEST WAS BELOW EXPECTATIONS BECAUSE OF EXTREMELY UNFAVORABLE WEATHER, BUT GROSS GRAIN HARVEST IN 1975 WILL EXCEED AVERAGE YIELD OF PAST FIVE-YEAR PLAN PERIOD (1967-70) AND WILL BE SIGNIFICANTLY MORE THAN IN 1972." (SOVIET STATISTICS CLAIM 33.4 MILLION TONS OF UKRAINIAN GRAIN FOR 1967-70 AND FOR DROUGHT YEAR OF 1972 ONLY 32.6 MILLION TONS. THE 1975 CROP IS THUS ABOUT 14 MILLION TONS BELOW THE PLAN ANNOUNCED IN PRAVDA UKRAINY, DECEMBER 25, 1974.)

3. "TWELVE OBLASTS HAVE ALREADY MET THE NATIONAL ECONOMIC PLAN AND SOCIALIST PLEDGES FOR GRAIN PROCUREMENT, AND NINE OBLASTS HAVE EXCEEDED THE FIRM PLAN. ALTHOUGH, UKRAINIAN COLLECTIVE AND STATE FARMS WILL SELL TO THE STATE 14 MILLION TONS OR 855 MILLION PUDS OF GRAIN. THIS IS 3 MILLION TONS MORE THAN THE FIRM PLAN. 9.5 MILLION TONS OF WHEAT HAVE ARRIVED AT GRAIN RECEIVING CENTERS WHICH IS ALMOST 50 PERCENT ABOVE THE PLAN."

4. REFERRING TO THE ABOVE, SHCHERBITSKIY URGED A CORRECT APPROACH TO EVALUATING THE RESULTS OF THE FARM YEAR. BELITTLEMENT CANNOT BE TOLERATED OF THE GREAT WORK DONE BY THE PARTY AND PEOPLE AND THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PARTY'S AGRARIAN POLICY, HE SAID. AND HE CLAIMED THAT FARM RESULTS ACHIEVED IN THE CURRENT FIVE-YEAR PERIOD TESTIFY TO THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE MARCH 1965 PARTY PLENUM. SHCHERBITSKIY'S PROGRAM OF REMEDIAL EFFORTS CALLED FOR THE ABOVE-PLAN SOWING OF WINTER GRAINS WHEREEVER POSSIBLE THIS FALL. AND HE CALLED FOR AN ACCELERATION OF FALL FALLOW PLOUGHING AND THE APPLICATION OF MORE FERTILIZER.

5. SHCHERBITSKIY SPOKE SCATHINGLY AND BY NAME OF THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FLAGGING PERFORMANCE OF THE STEEL AND COAL MINISTRIES; HE ALSO TOUCHED ON POOR WORK DONE BY OTHER MINISTRIES AS REPORTED BY PREMIER LYASHKO (REFTEL A). IN HIS OTHERWISE STANDARD TREATMENT OF IDEOLOGICAL EFFORTS TO BE DEVOTED TO CSCE, SHCHERBITSKIY INCLUDED THE CUSTOMARY UKRAINIAN EXHORTATION TO EXPOSE THE SALLIES OF IMPERIALISTS, NATIONALISTS ABROAD, AND ZIONISTS AND TO INCREASE THE IDEOLOGICAL SEASONING OF YOUNG PEOPLE.

6. COMMENT. SHCHERBITSKIY'S REMARKS ON THE UKRAINIAN GRAIN HARVEST ARE AN EXCEPTION TO THE SOVIET UNDERREPORTING OF HARVEST TOTALS DURING THIS YEAR OF DROUGHT. HIS REMARKS ALSO SUGGEST AWARENESS OF THE POSSIBILITY THAT BREZHNEV'S FARM PROGRAM AS PRESENTED IN MARCH 1965 IS VULNERABLE TO THE CHARGE OF INEFFECTIVENESS. OF COURSE, SHCHERBITSKIY IS DEFENDING NOT ONLY BREZHNEV'S FARM RECORD BUT ALSO HIS OWN STEWARDSHIP OF THE UKRAINE. THE BREZHNEV PROGRAM WAS DESIGNED TO ENSURE STEADY FARM YIELDS, AND THE MAY 1966 IRRIGATION PROGRAM WAS INTENDED TO CURB THE EFFECTS OF DROUGHT. BOTH 1972 AND 1975 HAVE SHOWN THE LIMITATIONS OF THESE PROGRAMS AS CURRENTLY EXECUTED.

7. A FOUR-DAY DELAY IN PUBLICATION OF SHCHERBITSKIY'S SPEECH SUGGESTS TO US THE IMPORTANCE OF THE HARVEST FIGURES IN THE CONTEXT OF SOVIET DOMESTIC POLITICS. THEY ARE, OF COURSE, VITAL FIGURES IN SOVIET INTERNATIONAL POLITICS AND IN THE WORLD GRAIN MARKET AS WELL. BUT SHCHERBITSKIY IS APPARENTLY AWARE THAT THE INTENSITY OF CRITICISM NORMALLY RISES ON THE EVE OF A PARTY CONGRESS, AND A HARVEST FAILURE CAN ONLY ADD FUEL TO THE FLAMES. HENCE HIS DEFENSIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD POSSIBLE CRITICISM OF THE FARM PROGRAM WHICH WAS SPONSORED BY BREZHNEV, SHCHERBITSKIY'S PATRON, AND IS MOST CLOSELY IDENTIFIED WITH BREZHNEV.

8. ON THE OTHER HAND, WE HAVE SEEN NO DIMINUTION OF THE ACCOLADES GIVEN TO BREZHNEV AT MEETINGS AND IN THE MEDIA; THE PRE-CONGRESS BREZHNEV BUILDUP IS CONTINUING. SHCHERBITSKIY IS SOLIDLY IN THE BREZHNEV CAMP AS WAS AGAIN SHOWN BY THE WARM PRAISE OF BREZHNEV, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BUT A CERTAIN RANGE OF ATTITUDES MAY WELL BE EXPRESSED IN THE SPEECHES AT MAJOR PARTY ELECTION MEETINGS THIS FALL.  
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